BALLET *today*

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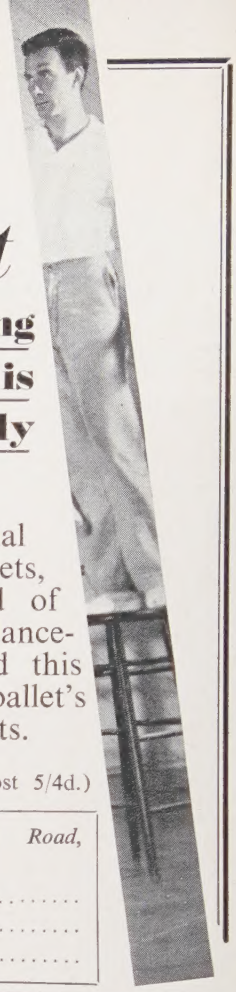

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Ballet Today

Editor: PETER CRAIG-RAYMOND

Beryl Grey and the Strong Heart

PHOTO: MIKE DAVIS

THE strains of Tchaikowski's Swan Lake *lent wings to the steps of Beryl Grey when in a London darkened by war she attempted for the first time the leading role in this classical full-length ballet. It was the 11th of June* 1943, *and Beryl Grey had turned fifteen. She is in fact the only ballerina to whom this exacting role has been entrusted so young. In spite of her lack of years Beryl Grey was no newcomer on the ballet-stage, for she had already nine years' experience behind her. Ballet was probably in Beryl Grey's blood as far back as she can remember.*

Can you tell me, Miss Grey, when did you start dancing and decide to become a ballet dancer ?

Beryl Grey : I started dancing at the age of four. I took it as an extra subject at school because I was an only child and my parents had thought this would be a nice way of mixing with other children. Then, when I was nine years old and had passed all the English examinations I was entered for, I won a scholarship to the Sadler's Wells Ballet School. It was then that I had to decide my future career. My mother was very keen for me to make ballet my career, but my father was quite against it.

BY the way, Miss Grey, how did you get an audition at Sadler's Wells ?

Beryl Grey : One day my ballet teacher Miss Madeline Sharp called up my mother and asked permission to take me up to town with my practice clothes and shoes. She got the permission, and so we went to the Sadler's Wells without my mother knowing it. There I had two auditions. The first one I had with a ballet mistress. I did half an hour's class. And the second was with the directress Ninette de Valois. Madame de Valois, after carefully inspecting my feet, asked me to dance two solos ; one pure classical and one solo without music. My poor teacher had to sing for accompaniment.

SINCE Beryl herself began her ballet-training at an age when normal children are still spending their time at nursery games, it might be appropriate to ask her opinion as to what is the best age to begin ballet-training.

What do you think is the best age for a girl to start ballet dancing seriously ?

Beryl Grey : I think that by the time a child is eight you can generally tell if there is any talent, and the serious dancing lessons would start at that age. I think it is dangerous to start too early, because the body is not formed.

AND so in 1937 the nine-year-old Beryl Grey had attained the ambition of every English girl who wants a ballet career. She was a student at Sadler's Wells Ballet School. That meant a rigorous period of work and practice.

Before long it became apparent that her dancing left her insufficient time for normal school-work. The latter was not, however, neglected ; first of all a private tutor was provided for the young girl, and later her uncle, the headmaster of a school, took charge of her instruction. While other children spent their leisure on the tennis-court or at entertainments, the future ballerina was studying. Besides her ballet-practice she studied piano-playing, singing, elocution and painting.

Beryl Grey is in fact a pianist of considerable talent, and often in her spare moments, at her beautiful home in Mayfair, she plays her favourite composers, Schubert and Chopin.

She possesses also an extensive library of gramophone records, in which the works of Beethoven, Mozart, Bach, Tchaikowski and Sibelius predominate.

TO THE NEXT PAGE

The outbreak of war almost put an end to Beryl Grey's ballet-studies, for Sadler's Wells closed down. But after six months it commenced activity

BALLET TODAY for February

● *Managing Editor : I. E. Herf, Publishing and Advertising address : 15, Upper Brighton Road, Surbiton, Surrey (Elmbridge 9743 & 2607). Subscription 15/-*

BERYL GREY

from the previous page

again. Beryl joined them, and came gradually to take part in Sadler's Wells' regular ballets.

Sadler's Wells gave performances with touring companies, and Beryl had to face a great deal of travelling under unpleasant war-time conditions. Beryl Grey's great opportunity came eight months after she had joined the regular company.

Sadler's Wells was at Oxford. Mary Honer and Julia Farron were on the sick-list, and when Margot Fonteyn fell ill Beryl Grey was told to dance the latter's leading roles. She had only a few hours to make ready.

Beryl was fourteen, and came successfully through this ordeal of an unexpected début, although there was time for only two rehearsals. The public that evening were enthusiastic, even though they had been deprived of the opportunity of seeing Margot Fonteyn.

Later on the public learned to go into raptures about the dancing of Beryl Grey too.

Birthdays have played an important part in Beryl Grey's artistic successes. On her fifteenth birthday she danced (as I have said before) *Swan Lake* ; on her seventeenth birthday she performed *Giselle* for the first time in London ; and when she was twenty-one, in 1948, on the evening of her birthday she took the part of Aurora in *The Sleeping Princess*. It should be mentioned too that at the age of twenty Beryl Grey had already danced the great romantic roles of classical ballet, except for the *Swanhilda in Coppelia*. What then are our ballerina's favourite roles ?

Beryl Grey : I adore *Swan Lake*, *Giselle* and *Les Sylphides*. Let us take *Swan Lake*, for instance.

It offers such a wonderful scope for dancing and action, as the role develops, and you must also remember that the choreography of *Swan Lake* is perfect. But I love to do modern ballets. One of my favourites is *Checkmate*, because the leading role, the *Black Queen*, is so dramatic.

BERYL never wearies as a rule of studying the dual character of *Odette-Odile* in *Swan Lake*. She discusses it with her professional colleagues, she sits in the theatre (generally in the "gods") watching the interpretation of other ballerinas, and she loves to observe in actual life swans and their light movements.

There are swans at her home too—on the surround of the fireplace, on the radio-cabinet, on top of the bookcase, in fact everywhere. She has received so many glass and porcelain swans from her admirers that they now make up a considerable collection.

Beryl Grey is known not only to the highly critical public of Covent Garden here in London but also to lovers of ballet everywhere in Europe and the United States. With Sadler's Wells she has won the applause of critics from the Atlantic to the Pacific. In Europe she has danced in almost every capital, except Paris.

Unfortunately it is almost true to say that every time Sadler's Wells has visited Paris Beryl Grey has been temporarily indisposed, or else some other obstacle has prevented her appearance.

The daily life of a ballerina is not easy. Every morning Beryl Grey has an hour and a half's practice with her private teacher, de Vos, and in addition she takes part with others in the instruction at Sadler's Wells ballet-class. The day's programme consists mostly of rehearsal of the current ballet or of forthcoming ones ; this may last for as much as three hours. In the afternoon she usually studies and practises dramatic representation.

The ballerina's career must have included many performances which have imprinted themselves indelibly on her memory.

Miss Grey, what do you think is your most exciting performance ?

Beryl Grey : One of the many exciting performances for me was at Covent Garden two Christmases ago, when I opened the new production of *Swan Lake* at the Royal Command Performance and at the interval was presented to the Royal Family. This was the first time I had taken the lead for an entire evening in front of our Royal Family. Another wonderful evening was when I danced in

—*To page Twenty-three*

Doris Laine and K. Vailon as Pean and Illusia in the ballet of that title in the repertoire of the Helsinki Ballet. The photographs on this page are off the Royal Swedish Ballet in Helsinki and were taken by Tenhovaara (below) and Esko Manninen (the three opposite)

A scene from the company's Faust ballet with Klaus Salin as Faust, Else Sylvestersom as Marguerite and Ellmo Onlinen as Mephisto.

Else Sylvestersom as Juliet in the Romeo and Juliet ballet which is in the company's repertoire.

Meydis Dayala as she appears in the Faust ballet with the company.

An Open Letter to ALICIA MARKOVA

Photo: Paul Wilson

PLANNING almost as far ahead as their minds travel backwards, several onetime dancers in the company of Anna Pavlowa are talking of remounting "Autumn Leaves" on January 23, 1956 in memory of the great Russian dancer.

Obviously inspired by the success of Richard Buckle's excellent Diaghilev Exhibition at Forbes-house, these stalwarts are planning to exploit the Pavlowa memory in as many ways as possible.

I—and I have not been more proud of any such withdrawal since Sir Oswald Mosley offered me a job—am not a member of the committee which is arranging the exploitation.

MY point in writing you in this fashion is to most earnestly beg you to give the committee your good wishes, a charming smile, and nothing more. You have become known to the world as not only a great dancer but as a sophisticated, mature woman of good taste and broad interest. You have been alive to the contemporary scene in ballet and have not shown any marked tendency to live in the past. Unlike those who would have you dance for wakes, your fame is in today, and safely here.

Let them mock yesterday's artists if they will by reviving —not quite the word—the charred embers of her sorry little ballets and showing appalling film reels probably playing some of the terrible music on tinkly pianos, too.

But you have no need to feel obliged in this way. Your service to the memory of Anna Pavlowa is in carrying to greater heights the art which she loved and in which she was so fine an artist.

I would watch you dance in any ballet—but, please, not in these falling leaves which, brown and withered, are to be held up to an innocent public who will be asked to believe that this is the sum of Pavlowa.

Unlike the committee I never danced with Pavlowa. Unlike the leeches I never used her name to give title to myself. But I sincerely believe that, in my stand, my respect for Anna Pavlowa surpasses the temple-shouting of her ardent admirers."

Sincerely,

Peter Craig-Raymond

The Grey Swan

Ballet in Review
by
PETER CRAIG-RAYMOND

WHAT we were doing New Year was watching Beryl Grey usurp Tchaikowski's libretto by making the *Swan Princess* into a trio. Beryl Grey was not the perfect white swan, not the perfect black swan . . . . she made of *Odette/Odile* a role all her own : the Grey swan.

I had—let me admit it—forgotten that Grey could dance like this. I had leashed that part of my memory which had recorded those slow motion sweeps in arabesque, the strong double pirouettes, the brilliant—and postage-stamp—fouettes.

Beryl Grey somehow misses the ultimate triumph, no matter how excellent her dancing. Is it her expression ? Her manner—in some way too normal ? Frankly I am unsure. One is left with the uneasiness that something is missing, and yet her work has been impeccable. Perhaps Grey is a borderline case between great talent and easy genius.

Certainly January 1 was, or must have been, one of the nights of her life. She won a warm, long reception from the house with which I was in complete accord for once.

Her partner, John Field, becomes a better consort with every performance and improves his manner on stage, too. Only in his own variation does he disappoint himself. He could well use some firmer, more ideal-strong teaching I imagine. It is unfortunate to watch a clumsy dancer, but tragic to watch a good one botch his evening by a single fault which could be corrected.

Alexander Grant being indisposed, he was replaced by Michael Boulton in the pas de six and by David Blair in the Neapolitan. Both filled in well, Blair dancing the pas de deux with Rosemary Lindsay with only a low-gear caution showing itself.

A compromise must be reached on the pas de trois. Either the orchestra must slow down for the dancers or the choreography must become a series of high kicks with which the dancers could keep time. As it is the race knows of no victor and only the audience languished.

BLAIR'S EVENING

SADLER'S WELLS return to Covent Garden on December 16 found me brooding on having added a year to my age, and the company apparently younger and with added vigour.

To me, David Blair was the focal point of the evening. He outdid himself—on last season's showing, admittedly not a difficult operation—and proved himself the really fine male dancer which many of us had believed him. His ease and control in pirouettes, his general manner and his superb elevation make him the most promising sign of the dance year. Now, in 1955, Blair should be given as much opportunity as possible to consolidate the promise.

If Alexander Grant does not win first place it is, quite simply, because by now I expect the very best from him. On this first evening he, too, was on even better form. His Barber was, if anything, a more pliable, india-rubber cartoon than before. Very good indeed. Grant, after years with the company, still attacks even an old role with colossal enthusiasm.

As Mam'zelle Angot, Nadia Nerina is perfectly cast and again danced excellently.

The ballet itself is humorous but needs some upwriting on the score, cutting in scenes two and three, and—desperately—new costuming for the Officer and Soldiers in scene two.

IMPERIAL

It is not quite fair to judge Rowena Jackson in Ballet Imperial. This arid Balanchine ballet which stays the course in first gear is not the vehicle for a ballerina who shares its attribute all too closely.

So far only Violetta Elvin and Rosemary Lindsay have injected any amount of personality into the ballet. Lindsay, on this occasion, danced the second lead to some effect, but Rowena Jackson hardly had a chance in this desert.

FIREBIRD

Firebird seemed changed not at all since last season. It remains a vibrant, beautifully mounted ballet.

But I did, for what it is worth, have an afterthought on Michael Somes. Could it be that Somes is attempting, in ballet, a compatable thinking to the Kazan-Wilder directorial theory in New York ?

As Marlon Brando, for example, stresses neo-naturalism (not realism) to the detriment of some of the theatrical projection rules, so Somes seems to be determined to achieve a characterization as "un-ballet boy" as possible.

For this he affects a heavy gate in walk and a slightly stooping "lurch" in stance. Whether this is suitable for such a role as the Prince in *Firebird* is a subsidiary point.

The real factor, as I see it, is whether Somes is thinking in this way ?

Is he trying to force this stylized, unballetic naturalism into his work ? If he is then one's criticism of him must naturally change and he must be judged upon his progress experimentally rather than upon his achievements from a strictly classical ballet viewpoint.

I am only sad that I cannot, for certain, decide whether Somes is dancing badly ; or proving himself the only thinking male dancer in England.

I sincerely hope it is the latter, and I will be watching carefully for proof—and results.

S. & S.

THE tale of *Simplice and Selina* is a dovetale of chocolate-wrapping romantic and first gear English tea-ballet humour. Why Sadlers Wells Theatre Ballet revived this "romantic satire" on December 22 is not immediately comprehensible. The repertoire is already overfull with trifles and, even over Christmas, a main course might well be introduced.

As a frame for Johaar Mosaval the ballet is excellent and he uses Andree Howard's choreography to advantage. For Patricia Miller Selina is a junior miss manequin engagement and in vicarage pastels and picture hat she looks well. For everyone else it is a test-piece in defining exactly where the humour starts.

It seems unfortunate that Rossini is given programme credit for the all-in-one collection of his most trite rambles which serves as a score for Selina.

Of the whole ballet I suppose it is the decor which is the most professional—and even here the artist, Peter Williams, has been insulted by having his work restaged without even a dusting.

All three of this company's revivals have been unfortunate this season—*Carnaval* was thrown on stage without even a gesture of respect for what was, and could be, an excellent work. *Harlequin in April* was staged without any adjustment of the decor, any idea of lighting Piper's quite interesting cloths or Cranko's upstage grouping, and with some very sketchy working of the choreography.

On January 18 the company is to mount a new ballet to Strawinski, *Danses Concertantes* by Kenneth Macmillan with decor by Nicholas Georgiadis. My New Year's Resolution was to discontinue the rash optimism of my anticipations . . . . but this new work could hardly sound better in promise. Next month I will comment upon the production.

WHO IS BOROVANSKY?

Sketch : JUNE RYAN Text : JOHN O'BRIEN

THOSE who fear, not without considerable evidence, a decline or deterioration in British ballet, may take heart from the news that ballet in the warm climate of Australia is having its greatest boom period since the days of the Ballet Russe.

Fanatical audiences, swooning and screaming, and queueing all night (and sometimes all day) for tickets, have even broken the box-office records of the Old Vic Company.

In Melbourne, in a theatre the size of Sadlers Wells, the Borovansky Ballet played right through from January to July with scarcely an empty seat, until they were eventually forced to move on to Sydney because the theatre had been booked for something else. And in Australia, we don't have programmes changing every night. A programme such as *Symphonie Fantastique*, *Les Sylphides* and *Pineapple Poll* would last for three weeks at least.

Who is Edouard Borovansky ? The life-story of a theatrical genius falls into such a familiar pattern, that a journalist can depict it with his eyes shut. The humble birth, the early struggles, the shortage of regular work and the monotony of temporary jobs, the starvation, the vagabond tours of the globe and their varying successes, triumph and recognition.

And Edouard Borovansky's story does not shatter this convention.

He was the son of a small-town clerk in Prague, and he did not want to be a ballet dancer. His grandfather had been a talented artist, and he, too, wanted to paint. His father, however, had different plans, so at the age of nine he was sent to study at the Prague Government Theatre, and by the time he was twenty-four he was leading dancer.

AMBITION

But his main ambition was to work with Pavlova, and when she finally agreed to accept him, he threw aside his career with the Government Theatre and its pension rights, and hurried to join her in Paris. For the next seven years he toured the world, and visited Australia for the first time in 1929. Algeranoff, who has also returned to Australia, was also in the company.

Unfortunately, although Pavlova paid her dancers well, life became exceedingly monotonous because her repertoire never changed. For the female dancers there was a little more excitement, because there was always the possibility of Pavlova dismissing them if they became too good. But in 1929 Diaghilev died, and two years later Pavlova, and a most important period of ballet died with them.

Then Borovansky's period of vagabondage began ; the damp attics, the sordid landladies demanding rent in advance, the interim jobs, and the desperate necessity of keeping in training, although the only jobs to be had were in musical comedy or the Folies.

EXCITEMENT

In 1932, the ballet world breathed again with new excitement. Colonel de Basil and Rene Blum were reviving the Ballets Russe. Dancers were picked up cheaply, night and day they worked on new ballets, and a life of enthusiastic touring began again.

In 1938, "Boro", as he is affectionately called by his dancers, returned to Australia with de Basil's company, and he eventually decided to make it his permanent home. He had been impressed by the talent of Australian dancers, and he had the vision to see far enough ahead that perhaps one day he could have the first permanent Australian ballet company. So he and his brilliant wife, Xenia, gambled their savings again. Together they equipped a large studio in Melbourne.

She taught and he produced, and as soon as they could afford it, they added a small stage for "workshop" Sunday performances. These were more successful than they imagined they could have been, and they were soon faced with the prospects of interesting professional managements in the company. "An Australian ballet won't have any box-office appeal", they told him. He proved them wrong.

Later J. C. Williamson's engaged his company, and their permanent period of professional activity began in 1943.

TODAY

Works such as *Carnival*, *Les Sylphides* *Le Beau Danube* *Swan Lake* Act 2, *Coppelia*, *Scheherazade*, *Autumn Leaves* and *Giselle* were presented, and today, if you are lucky enough to get a seat, you may see them doing most of these, or any of *Graduation Ball*, *La Symphonie Fantastique*, *Petrouchka*, *Prince Igor*, *Pineapple Poll*, *La Bouri Puw Fantasque* or perhaps even their full length version of *The Sleeping Beauty*.

Borovansky is a sturdy little man, with dapper side-whiskers, a glossy egg-shaped head, and a quick sense of humour. Some say that he is arrogant, obstinate and temperamental, and they are probably right, but he is a shrewd business man and he possesses the more important qualities which endear him to his dancers, and encourage them to do their best. Remembering possibly his early struggles, he is determined to see that they are well paid.

Choreography has never been his strong suit, and in recent years he has wisely refrained from presenting his own ballets.

His memory is phenomenal, and quite up to the task of reviving most of the repertoire of the Ballets Russe, and he may still occasionally be seen performing some of the character parts which he did so brilliantly in the de Basil company.

From time to time, the best of his dancers have deserted him and gone overseas to seek their fortunes. You will always find ex-Borovansky dancers at Sadlers Wells, the Ballet Rambert and Festival Ballet. In turn, this has meant that he has had to go on talent-searches to Europe, and he has brought back with him Paul Grinwis, Kiril Vassilkovsky and Poul Gnatt, or induced successful Australian dancers in Europe, such as Peggy Sager, Vassili Trunoff and Kathleen Gorham to return to his company to keep it up to strength.

DEVOTED

Yes, his whole life has been devoted to ballet, and his faith in the Australian dancer has certainly been justified. And, of course, now he has a little time to devote to his hobbies : painting has become one of them.

He is not in the least "arty" or affected, and my only regret is that he has never thought fit to engage an artistic director, to keep a permanent eye on the finer points of style and production.

The woods aren't full of people with Marie Rambert's taste !

But I remember Joyce Graeme doing wonders with inferior material for his former rivals, the rather amateur Australian National Ballet.

Are English Dancers Artists?

Question is posed by

Sheila Henderson

AH, yes, England, the dance centre of the world". "In the English dancers you will find everything that is perfect; marvellous technique", I was told when I spoke of my proposed visit to this country in my native Argentina.

The excitement (and tribulations) of the journey over and after a little sight seeing, I at last found myself "at the ballet" and settled in my seat to watch the performance of one of the leading English companies.

The programme was to open with a well known and often performed white ballet. The lights lowered, the music began and I was all attention.

Towards the end of the ballet, I realized that I did not sit entranced and awed as I imagined I would, and as the curtain came down and the lights went up, for the first interval I could feel a little sinking feeling inside of me.

ACCURACY

There was nothing lacking technically in the performance I had seen, in fact every step had been performed with an accuracy which was almost frightening and the corp de ballet had danced very evenly and surely kept the straightest and most orderly lines I had ever seen.

That was as far as it went however, and although many will hasten to ask disgustedly, "Well, what more do you want, what more could you ask for ?", let me tell you that there is something which I value even more than masterly technique, it is the art of interpretation, the quality which elevates a dancer to the status of an artist.

A good performance is one during which the dancers can transport their public to the land they are portraying, so that they hardly know they are sitting in a theatre in an "every day" world. This feeling which I have experienced on occasions, leaves a spiritual tranquility impossible to define . . . . . .

EXCUSES

But I must return to the performance I was watching. To counteract that slightly depressed state of mind, I made excuses, telling myself that most dancers are a little nervous at the beginning, that as the evening progressed they would warm up.

I was sorely disappointed, for the other two ballets which I saw were given in the same way, technically perfect, but cold and mechanical.

Nor did I find reason to change my first impressions in other performances I saw by that and other companies, with perhaps the exception of a few individual dancers.

All things must have a motive, and the English are known all over the world as a retiring and austere people, a temperament which reflects itself in all things they do and even in their ballet.

I was curious, though, to know more about those very tidy corp de ballet lines and to see for myself the training which led up to this exacting discipline.

The obvious places to go were the ballet schools, so I visited several, watching the baby classes as well as the in-betweens and the seniors.

NEAT

There it was, plain to see. A class of children doing very neat and precise steps, all very equal, being severely reprimanded if one in a flight of fantasy added a little something of his or her own.

The emphasis seemed to be on the feet, to attain steps correctly and neatly done like a machine printing a pattern which must not have any flaws. What about the head and body ?—Well, held rather rigid. And the arms ? Oh, only demi-bras or perhaps first position until they are older.

The arms of Elvin have often been commented upon and those of Fintein in *Firebird* deserve nothing but high praise. How are these children ever to enact anything as beautiful as these two ballerinas if they are not allowed to use their arms "until they are older", when their feet have become so accustomed to working on their own that they will not co-ordinate with the rest of the body ?

FOOLISH

To allow children to fling their arms about as they please would, of course, be utterly foolish, but surely some delicate arm movements combined with simple steps to give ease and flow of movement and done to inspiring music, to bring out personality rather than the "exercise and no nonsense" tunes, would not be wrong ?

After this strict tuition graduation to a corp de ballet, where they are drilled to move and probably even think like the dancer standing beside them. Any attempt at self-expression is strongly frowned upon and crushed, for the corp must all be the same; but this can also be carried to the extreme.

Are not English schools perhaps inflicting too much discipline ?

When a dancer is finally offered a solo part, what happens —his or her performance is cold and devoid of warmth, as personality has been killed in the struggle for uniformity and technicality.

The trouble with ballet in this country and all over the world is that it is passing through the "jet age" and suffering from materialism.

FORGETTING

The aim of dancers today, and I think in particular English dancers, seems to be to perfect technique, foregoing everything else and forgetting that ballet is primarily an art, a source from which to create something beautiful and delicate and not a factory turning out whirling robots.

By this I do not mean that technique should not be considered at all, on the contrary, my ideal would be a company which could successfully combine the two, a good and strong, but not overbearing, technique with a sensitive and expressive power of interpretation. In fact, a company which could strike the "happy medium".

GEORGE GONCHAROV

: teacher of the dance

GEORGE GONCHAROV, unsparing teacher and Ballet Master, kindly acquaintance and man of goodwill, died on December 30th 1954 at the age of fifty. His pupils, who include a great many dancers of the first distinction, will mourn a generous, vigorous and sympathetic Maestro.

Born at St. Petersburg in 1904 he was trained at the Maryinski Theatre, where, for a time, he danced. Towards the end of the twenties, with Vera Volkova, he established the school at Shanghai where Margot Fonteyn took her fledgling steps. After the war he came to London and for two years taught at the Sadler's Wells School.

When Volkova went to Milan and Denmark, Goncharov took over her Ballet School in West Street.

Goncharov, for all his ready friendliness, was a lonely man; a faithful servant of the dance; open minded in his judgements, and eager to share his enthusiasms.

I shall miss meeting him at ballet first nights, his eyes shining with excitement, the words falling out in a jumble of communication which, in spite of difficulties and differences of language, he must share.

Caryl Brahms

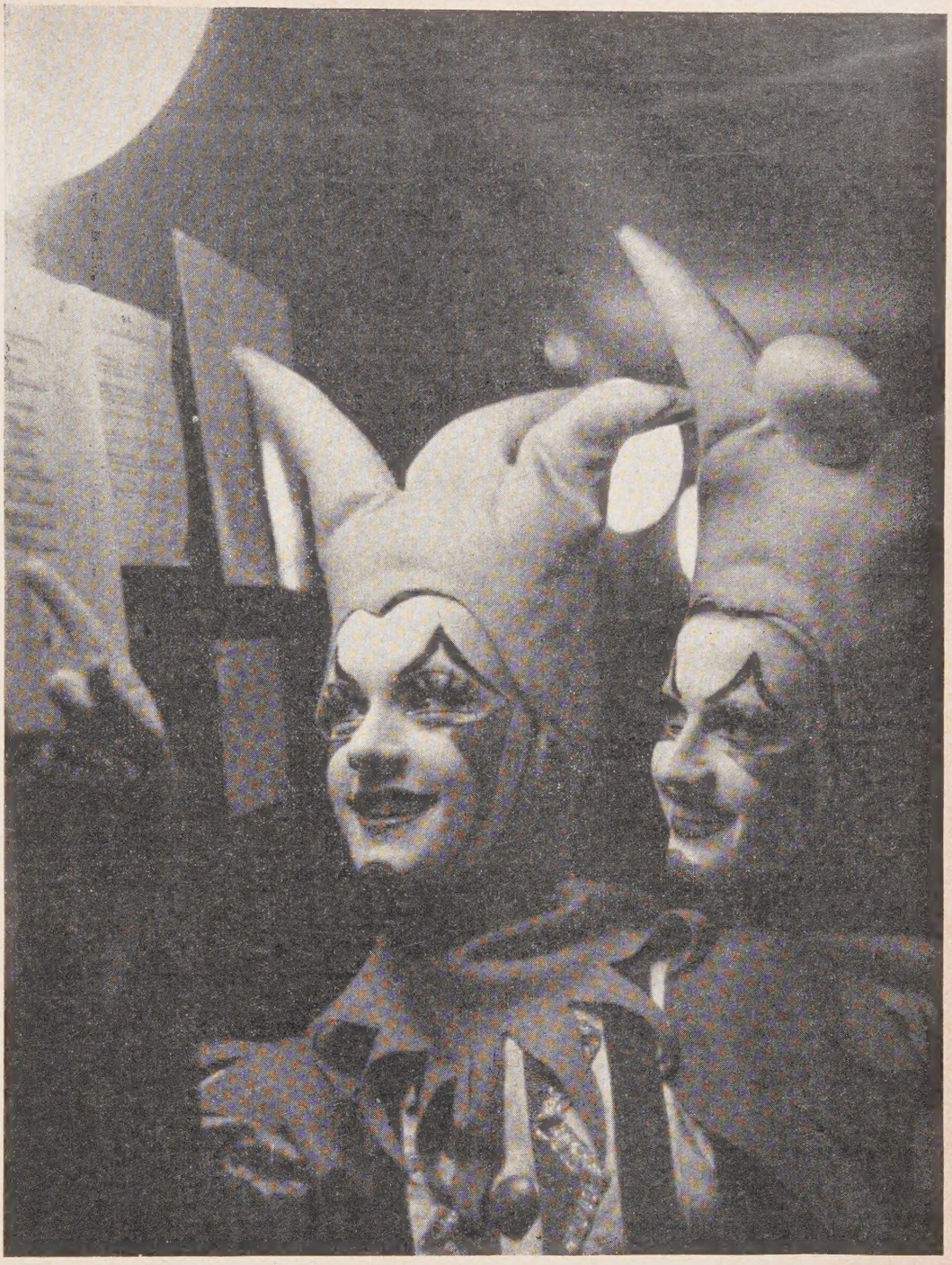
Owing to the unusually heavy commitments which her current work for television is entailing, Caryl Brahms has been unable to write her regular column for this issue.

Miss Brahms will, however, return to this page in the next BALLET TODAY—as will Violetta Elvin who has also been prevented from writing in this issue.

Also in the March BALLET TODAY will be "Ulanova Speaks . . .", new Rubin de Rays photographs, a profile of Boris Trailine, a further "Ideal Ballerina" description and some thoughts on the need for rivalry in English ballet.

The March BALLET TODAY will be on sale February 20.

AMERICA SEES FESTIVAL BALLET



Noel Rossana and Anita Landa check the tour schedule.
(Photo : Mike Davis)

by GEORGE JOHN JACKSON

FESTIVAL BALLET is the third English dance troupe to visit the North American continent. The company's tour of the major cities of Canada and the United States is under the supervision of Mr. Sol Hurok, as were also the engagements of the Sadler's Wells Ballet and the Theatre Ballet of Sadler's Wells. In writing of the Festival Ballet's tour, I have tried to summarize the general reactions of audiences and critics on the western side of the Atlantic rather than report my own impression of the company.

That the Festival Ballet has not yet been seen in New York City makes generalization easy. For like Paris, New York is a creative capital whose audiences react to all fashions with plebeian extremes of like or dislike. Comparatively, provincial audiences in both France and North America have developed fine judgment and a quietly cultured good taste.

At most performances Festival Ballet danced revivals of ballets by Michael Fokine. *Les Sylphides, Prince Igor, Scheherezade* were carefully produced copies of the original choreographies and, like so many other copies, were thought to be very dull because they were so careful.

Petrouchka, however, was no pale imitation of a Fokine original. Perhaps the ballet's pristine vitality was restored by Strawinski, conducting his own score. Perhaps the dancers were so eminently well suited to their roles that the ballet's full beauty moved audiences to enthusiastic applause. Whatever the reason, *Petrouchka* was one of the only two works in Festival Ballet's entire repertory which had an American success

"NOT SUITED"

The Fokine productions apart from *Petrouchka* and performances of such standard classics as *The Nutcracker* and *Swan Lake* gave many people the impression that, despite the special talents of individuals, this essentially English troupe was not well suited to dance ballets from the Russian repertoire.

Three modern British ballets showed Festival Ballet's dancers to much better advantage, unfortunately for the company's reputation, these works were not danced often enough. *Vision of Marguerite*, Fred Ashton's ballet on the Faust theme, was generally thought to be the finest piece shown on this tour. Michael Charnley's two ballets, *Symphony for Fun* and *Alice in Wonderland*, received mild praise.

The company's only long ballet, the three-act *Esmeralda*, was a failure. Disliked by the majority of the public, it was defended, however, by a small clique of admirers who voiced strong arguments in its favour. These critics admitted the faults : poor music by Cesare Pugni, some of Nicola Benois' vivid decors and costumes, elimination of the prison scene which gave the ballet its dramatic focus, the silly happy ending.

Yet, they found much to praise : for as the ballet's plot evolved to show an imaginary cross section of Paris life in the Middle Ages, Beriozoff's choreography was magnificently appropriate to each social class taking the stage. Esmeralda and the street dancers displayed flashy, slyly vulgar acrobatics which moved in effective contrast to the formal, elegant dances of the nobility and the grotesque configurations of the Paris plebs.

After the American tour, the ballet is to be dropped from the repertory.

TONI LANDER

Of all the dancers, the Danish ballerina Toni Lander enjoyed the warmest reception. Although she danced only one role, the Bride in *Napoli*, a ballet not well liked, she performed so beautifully that she won an immediate following.

—To page Sixteen

Is Zest An Ideal In Ballet?

THE recent exhibitions of Russian hors d'oevers contained, perhaps, too much meat and not quite enough dressing. Worse, the bill of fare was decapitated immediately after this sweet-sour appetizer.

To judge dancers on two or three political rally "bits" is to my mind monstrous. I do, however, bow in reverence before those critics who not only manage this hyperpsychic feat but even obtain a full denouement on Soviet ballet, technique, costuming and decor from such "bits."

I will not quarrel with them. It is the oldest argument in criticism that one mouthful of omelette can tell the palate how the eggs are. If these freres can do it, excellent.

DISPUTABLE

I would feel happier with their innate clairvoyance if only their basic eyesight were less patchy. I found one doyen of the Sundays referring to Struchkova's dexterous rocketing, catching and tossing when he was writing of a performance in which she misjudged timing and slipped out of her fishdive. Certainly her partner covered well, but surely the critic should have seen the slip ?

It seems disputable whether such critics can judge the whole contemporary Soviet ballet upon the basis of a performance which they did not even see clearly.

I found the Princes Theatre performance by Struchkova and Lapauri very disappointing. They repeated a pas de deux seen before, and danced it less well than before. Their added pas de deux, to Gounod's Walpurgisnacht Music, was only comparable to one of the later-day Wiessmullers and their Janes, or to a weight-lifting championship. I realize that such spieling fairground stuff is necessary for Communist Party associates, but it is no choreography to give dancers of this stature.

PARADISE

The dancers are not to blame, only in so far as any dancer has the right to refuse her body to incompetent, bad or vulgar choreography. And here—who are we to criticise ? The first time I hear of an English dancer doing anything apart from keeping her head bowed, her eyes muted and her simpering voice saying "yes" to anything . . . . . I shall fishdive into some private opium paradise where such ideals find their terra firma.

But Richard Buckle raised one issue in his Observer dance column which is worth the noting. He wrote of vulgarity as a by-product of zest.

He is, of course, perfectly right.

Zest is the most necessary quality in theatrical dancing—because it is, in fact, a colloquialism for Stanislawski's "theatre"—but, as no director understands it, it is not given direction.

HIGHROPE

You cannot, for instance, expect zest at the Garden. When one does find it—say in Rabovsky—there is, unfortunately, no direction to smooth the zest into a fully mature, artistic theatre. Rabovsky and Lapauri could wipe the boards with any normal male dancer. And yet a good number of these "normal" dancers could leave both men downstage when the test is stage rightness or fully masked technique. The genius, as always, is at once outstanding and indeterminate. He will do everything brilliantly, yet one will often feel that dread more associated with highrope walkers than with art.

Struchkova, for instance, has a strong, beautiful pirouette. But once in a while she all but has to be wheeled to face the house.

MOTTO

To tie it in a generalism : the competent is predictable, the genius is sporadically fabulous and fickle. There are cognacs which are unwavering in their thin quality, there are cognacs which are thick and full—but quite often unexpected when decanted. Would you rather put down the "Be sure, buy . . . . . " or gamble on turning up the odd misfire among the really fine ?

Zest has no part in competency, you can have one or t'other.

For my part I will accept the risk of occasional misfire through being too headily full with enthusiasm. These tactful, cautious, driving test dancers who work on the brake are as much a byproduct of English thinking as vulgarity is a possible byproduct of zest.

After all, it was in Britain that the failure's motto was conceived : Safety First.

EQUITY ON THE S.W. THEATRE BALLET

THE following statement is from the Equity Letter of the Actors' Equity Association who acted on behalf of their members in the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet during the recent dispute.

"The controversy between Equity, on behalf of the dancers in this company, and the management, occupied a good deal of public attention towards the end of August.

The background is provided by the history of this company in the past seven years. It began in a modest way as a company of young dancers, fresh from the Ballet School, who were to dance in some of the operas.

From the beginning it appears to have been regarded by the Sadler's Wells Foundation as very much of a junior company, the "children" who were fortunate enough to enjoy the name "Sadler's Wells" in their title and thus secure some of the reflected glory of the senior company, the Sadler's Wells Ballet (not *Theatre* Ballet) which is based on Covent Garden. But while the senior company occupied most of the attention of the Foundation the junior company at Sadler's Wells imperceptibly grew in status.

This process was hastened by a number of successful foreign tours. It was not possible to advertise the company in America as a "junior" company. It was stated to be a "sister" company. Some of its leading dancers were taken into Covent Garden. Nevertheless its growing prestige could not be ignored and its tours were profitable. The dancers were also growing up. Many were now married.

STATUS

In spite of this higher status the position at the end of last season was that ten dancers were still earning only £7 a week and 21 were still earning £8 10s. or less.

The dancers, principals and corps de ballet, decided themselves that they would refuse to sign contracts unless the whole level of salaries was raised. Initially they asked for an all-round increase of £2.

The rest will be known from the Press. We did not secure an all-round increase, but we did achieve individual increases with a minimum of £1 and averaging approximately £2. Secondly, there is now an agreed scale for newcomers starting at £7 and rising by six-monthly increments of 10/- to £9. Holiday payments have been increased from £4 10s. to £6 per week. Lastly, the management have agreed to examine with us the possibility of a fifty-two week contract similar to that which is given to the dancers at Covent Garden, who receive full salary for the fifty-two weeks including holidays and rehearsal periods.

The Council wishes to congratulate this company on their courageous and united stand. We will continue to watch closely the fortunes of the Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet."

UNEMPLOYMENT

An Equity survey shows that only 55 per cent of members are working in any one week in the theatre, 9 per cent in films, video or radio, 14 per cent will be registered as unemployed, 7 per cent will be working outside the profession, 5 per cent will be unavailable for work, 5 per cent will be between jobs and another 5 per cent will be seeking work although not registered as unemployed.

Members have an expectation of 23 weeks work, 18 of these in the theatre, and 29 weeks out of work.

Moira Shearer

SO many requests have come in for copies of the December issue containing Pigeon Crowle's intriguing, illustrated story on Moira Shearer that our stock of this issue is very low indeed.

* * * *

We always try to keep a good supply of all back-numbers but if you require the December issue, please order by the next post to ensure we can supply you. 1/3*d to include postage and packing.*

the season in review

THE absence of Rosella Hightower, its Ballerina Assoluta, and of the Marquis, the moving spirit of the company, weighed heavily on the Paris season of the Cuevas Ballet ; but, fortunately, personalities capable of maintaining its usual brilliance appeared among the stars, soloists and corps de ballet, and the difficulties occasioned to this troupe by the amputation of two indispensable heads only made themselves apparent in certain novelties in the repertory—with their regrettable appearance of improvisation —and in the mediocrity of the orchestra, which neither M. Girard nor M. Cloez, for all their competence, managed to make endurable.

This year's creations were :

Concerto : A seductive work, which Nijinska has lovingly refurbished. Some inequalities in construction are very largely offset by the pleasure of seeing two really great stars—Marjorie Tallchieff and Genia Melikova—in (unfortunately) inhumanly difficult variations.

Duo : Based on a most interesting idea of the Marquis de Cuevas (who personally designed wonderful lighting for it), Paul Goube has given this work a rather feeble choreography which, in its better moments, recalled some of Frederick Ashton's over-elaborated complications in *The Wanderer*.

Prince Igor : (Nijinska, after Fokine) is a varied, artistic and sonorous disorder. One noticed that some of the newly-engaged male dancers were well below standard. Sonia Arova is splendidly fiery. This ballet is difficult to stage, and the short time allowed to the choreographers accounts for a somewhat inadequate presentation.

Bolero : (Nijinska) is a very Polish idea of a Spanish dance, with music by a well-known French composer named—Ravel! Gontcharowa designed an admirable setting for it, and Marjorie Tallchieff sparkled with unexpected brilliance.

LITTLE MIRACLE

Wladimir Skouratoff has also tried his hand at choreography. Scarlatiana is an agreeable sketch, full of animation and in the best of taste ; the author has, in his first ballet, accomplished a little miracle of graceful drollery. He is very well served by Jacqueline Moreau, coquettish and petite, and by Daniel Sellier, an unbelievable operetta bandit who, in a too-short role, manages by his lively sense of theatre to make himself the central personage of the ballet : by Oleg Sabline, who had happily shed his usual reserve to emerge as a delicately comic Pierrot, Olga Makcheeva, and Beatrice Consuelo. Decors and costumes are by Severin.

Skibine's *Retour*, with Serge Prokofiev's music and not very successful decors and costumes by Stanislas Lepri, has the merit of putting on stage the soloists Wolfgang Brunner, Beatrice Consuelo, Oleg Sabline and Ivan Dragadze, whose real worth has thus come to light and who have given proof of their ability to uphold major roles.

Even though the choreography —very fine but too tiring for the effect it produces—does not always go well with the music, one cannot give too much encouragement to this attempt to disclose hidden talent.

This gives us occasion to hope that "stars" who are, perhaps, rather too jealous of their prestige, may agree to give up their roles from time to time to others equally worthy but less fortunate. The policy of never separating the 'owner' from the role (the 'star system') cannot fail to weaken this company by overloading some and discouraging others.

TOO SELDOM

Skibine, a choreographer whose work is too seldom seen, is getting ready an end-of-season work—*La Reine Insolente* (*Gastaldi-Serrette*).

Belinda Wright, Serge Golovine's new partner, made a rather dull debut in the pas-de-deux from *Casse—Noisette*. She has progressed since then, and in *L'Oiseau Bleu* and *Arlequinade* she pulled herself together and shows great promise for the future. Serge Golovine, after a short period of weakness, is slowly regaining his usual form.

It is always a pleasure to see Petrouchka. in which Golovine (Petrouchka), Skouratoff (the Moor) Moreau (the Ballerina Tania Ouspenska (the nurse) Olga Makcheeva (the street dancer) and Michel Reznikoff (first coachman) do wonders.

Responsibility for the classic repertoire rests, for the moment, on three ballerinas, who have taken the opportunity to reveal their differing talents.

Jacqueline Moreau was a real revelation in *Giselle*. and Marjorie Tallchieff gave an intelligent version of *Swan Lake*—which was also a triumph for Genia Melikova, the loveliest Princess Odette whom we have seen since Margot Fonteyn.

Her very individual style, rich, poetic and extremely consistent, her admirable arms and her technical control put her in a higher class, and one can only hope that the Marquis will pay special attention to her and give her roles worthy of her.

Daniel Sellier, the real first character dancer of the troupe, has been admirable and—as usual—won much applause in the course of the season. One might specially select his remarkable interpretation of the butterfly Iphias in *Piege De Lumiere*. In this role, usually danced by Serge Golovine, he surpassed his senior.

UNEVEN

In the rather uneven repertoire of this troup, one sees some people too seldom and others—too often. Naming no names for the latter, the former class includes Sonia Arova, who deserves more than one solitary role ; Beatrice Consuelo, the gracious maiden of *L'Ange Gris*, in which she dances beautifully with Michel Nunes ; Olga Makceeva, fiery and spiritual by turns ; and Tania Ouspenska, with her restrained comedy and interesting expressions.

The end of this season gives rise to some anxiety. Is not the Marquis' effort running down ? The present financial situation, difficult for everybody, compels him to pare his expenditure—and that may explain the paucity of important works presented to the Parisian public this season, and the poor quality of some of the 'reconstitutions'.

Jean Coquelle

—from page fifteen

FERDINAND REYNA writes from Paris : **Peter van Dyck** made his debut at the Opera in **Serge Lifar's** Divertissement, as Prince Charming. He immediately impressed the audience with his nobility, bearing and elegance—and by his technique. Whatever prejudices one might have expected due to his nationality were overcome by his manifestly superior attainments.

The French ballet writers gave a friendly dinner to **Carlotta Zambelli,** now senior dancing professor at the Opera, and to ballet master **Albert Aveline.** Between them, these two have given 130 years of service at the Opera !

The Ballet Tziganes—of the Hungarian National State Troupe —will appear at the Empire this month with forty dancers, fifty singers and a score of tzigane musicians.

T.V. and Ballet

Choreograp

● *Ballet on Television. Christian Simpson discusses presentation*

BALLET is now accepted by viewers as a regular television item. Apart from occasional programmes like *Scenes from Swan Lake* and various solo recitals, it is featured in the magazine programmes like "Music for You" and "This is Show Business". The Ballet for Beginners series succeeded in bringing home to viewers something of the technique and art of ballet dancing besides which the 'ordinary viewer', in seeing more and more dancers in action, begins to acquire a critical faculty whereby he discriminates sensibly between good and bad dancing.

Besides modern, we have presented most of the classical works of the theatre. *Giselle*, *Swan Lake*, *The Sleeping Beauty*—even *Les Sylphides*—have appeared in various adapted forms on the screen. Perhaps the most important experiment that I have made in this direction was the revival of *Le Pavillon D' Armide* using the original story and revised choreography by Walter Gore.

ADAPTATION

In this production several camera 'tricks' were used.

The interpretation of the story demanded diminutive dancing figures (the twelve hours) to be superimposed within an ornamental clock which was upheld by the life-size figures of Cupid and Old Father Time. Other requirements were the appearance and disappearance of sorcerers through smoke and dancers' shadows becoming detached and moving separately from their owners.

These effects were obtained by merging action from two or more stages and by directing the dancers from a T.V. monitor screen.

This business of adaptation does not mean 'altering the choreography' or in any way mutilating the original.

It is, rather, the process of adjusting the work to the new conditions. We find, for instance, that by altering the positioning o

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...opens up the question of new choreography designed for the screen.

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...plain this more clearly it is as well to ...e different conditions which con... theatre-goer as opposed to the viewer ... home.

...ering the theatre, one is conscious ...things. It is almost like entering a ...new world. One sits and is caught ...e with the sense of anticipation of the ... The warmth, the colour, the ... help to make one feel buoyant— ...e performance starts. This 'theatre ...t persuasive and it usually takes a ...nce indeed to quell one's enjoy...

...d, we are drawn into the per... ...er it be intended or not, I am ...of the physical effort and nervous ...s into the dancing. A difficult ...ng which I experience too. Even ... the bite of points into boards ...e excitement of the occasion—and ...ished the applause has nothing to ...—it is unanimous approval of a ...ne.

...HE VIEWER ?

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...f the receiver we are more able to ... distant dispassionate view of the ...re not 'in it' any more and unless ...pectacular happens on that screen ...y want to switch off ! The feet ...e conscious of a flat pattern of ... the receiver frame, a changing ...als, perhaps, to the intellect more ...

...tory which will hold our attention ...tand the purpose of the dancing. ...e may take a more intense and ...he dancers.

...s state of affairs, the producer may ...t the non-enthusiastic viewer. ...picture sequences which employ ...effects in order to recreate the ...t story. This is one way to do it. ...ne other hand, go to the opposite ...rately feature the physical aspects. ...hd feet taken at the right moments ... the viewer a strong sensation of action. Admittedly, this would be a ruthless procedure and, although it might make extremely vital and 'live' television material, it would go against the aims of the dancer, not to speak of the choreographer!

But all this is about televised ballet, can it really be called *television* ballet ?

IDEALISTIC ?

I think not.

A choreographer devising material purely for the screen can be idealistic about it. He can forget the theatre. Indeed, he can forget the floor even if his dancers have to tread on it, for now they are trapped like goldfish in a bowl within the limited camera aperture. But this is no real limitation, for by moving the cameras and by introducing electronic and other effects a spacial conception of movement can be achieved.

The only equivalent to this that I can think of is the Norman McClaren film where abstract effects are created by film means. Dancers and electronic effects—on the other hand—are the tools of television.

So far only one programme has been devoted to abstract visual experiment. It came about as the result of a visit to my office by an American student named John Hoppe. With him he brought what he called a new idea in mobile lighting. He walked over to the window and produced from his pocket a piece of pliable, polished metal shaped rather like a bow-tie. Thrusting this into the sunlight he manipulated the strip with his fingers, reflecting onto the ceiling an ever-changing pattern of light.

During the discussion which followed I learned that he had already infused some other young people with his doctrine, and we arranged in the studio an experimental session for this mobile lighting group.

Projecting their combined efiorts onto a screen, the cumulative result was sometimes highly effective. In addition to this they had ingeniously created sound to match the visual effects by the unorthodox use of tape recorders.

ORIGINAL

As a result of this closed-circuit try-out we prepared the programme *Shapes and Sounds*.

Designed as an experiment in abstract art it was entirely original in conception. Camera movement was utilised in a setting composed of light shafts, pieces of sculpture and model-size structures within which a human figure materialised to carry the theme to its conclusion.

So far, these experiments with ballet have had limited opportunities to develop. To avoid experimenting at the viewers' expense we need 'closed-circuit' try-outs so that results can first of all be judged on monitor screens in the control room.

But, at present, the overburdened studios cannot cope with these extra commitments and, regrettably, we must wait for expansion.

I very much hope that the BBC's alternative programme (when it is inaugurated) will provide more room for ballet programmes—either taken from the theatre, or devised at the outset for the television screen.

Aisle

A COMMENTARY ON

This portrait of Oleg Briansky was finished during the last London season of Festival Ballet and is, of course, by June Ryan whose series of portraits has become such a popular feature.

THE cover of this issue is by the famous Parisien photographer **Rubin De Rays.** Recently in London, and staying at the Ritz, I caught up with this fleeting photographer who is more used to Vogue than to *Ballet Today* !

The cover is the result—produced under a photographic technique new to ballet magazines and, with one or two exceptions, new to British magazines altogether. I had been trying to get results under this process for some time when **M. De Rays** arrived with what I think is a perfect result.

The subject of the sitting was, of course, **Tamara Toumanova.** In coming months we will be featuring other covers and photographs by **M. De Rays** which I hope fascinate you as much as they have me.

I HEAR that, at last, some practical answer has been found for the problem of professionally training dancers who find themselves precluded from continuing their studies due to lack of money.

Next year a really beautiful Christmas card is to be designed and produced, all the profits of which are to be set aside in a fund to give cash to dancers in need of it to finish their studies.

I understand that no fees or even out-of-pocket expenses are to be paid from the fund (I wonder if this applies to other committees and groups in ballet ?) and that those who do any service towards the fund will not be reimbursed in any way. I have offered to design and supervise the production of the cards if this be so and I am told that the books of the fund will be fully open to inspection.

I hope to have more news of this unique and praiseworthy idea very soon—what a pity it was not introduced for 1954 !

And I hope that other magazines, and not only *Ballet Today*, will be as active in publicising this remembrance of ballet's current needs as they are at pining their space away on the autumn leaves of ballet's yesterday.

We will see.

Meanwhile may I ask any reader with similar ideas to this or with suggestions for supplementing the idea, to write me ?

METRO-GOLDWYN-MAYER's *The Last Time I Saw Paris* (how nostalgic **Kern** is !) is what the Hollywood columnists and **Miss Lejeune** call "a weepie". But how superbly done. **Elizabeth Taylor**, a fashion show as ever, more beautiful than ever, and improving as an artist on every showing. **Van Johnson** in his first mature acting role. And **Sandra Descher** as the baby ballerina.

There is no dancing in the film, except for the "toe dancing" of *five*-year-old **Sandra.** This is, probably, the only error in the film. Otherwise it is a sad, emotionally-straining movie told in glib terms but with an undercurrent of the stuff of life.

I see from the columns of London's Evening News that **Violetta Elvin** is to dance the Firebird as I suggested. Sadly, Carmelite-house is more informative on this score than is the Opera House !

COMING in March is the first "handbook" for professional dancers and students—"Dancer's Handbook." This will be a five shilling annual publication giving all the information, facts and contacts needed by dancers. The handbook is announced by Ballet Publications whose "Your Child in Ballet" is now on sale.

Walter Gore, Paula Hinton, Cecil Bates, Beverley Richards and **Peter Dickinson** have all sailed for Australia to set up a new Gore Ballet under the auspices of the Australian Ballet Society in Melbourne. This will be in opposition to the firmly entrenched Borovansky Ballet. Adding to the compe-

THE BALLET MONTH

tition will be Festival Ballet who are to tour Australia this year. Meanwhile the Borovansky Ballet breaks records—even that of the Old Vic in Adelaide ! **Poul Gnatt** has returned to the company, de Cuevas-Balanchine dancer **Jocelyn Vollmar** has joined, and—for **Kathleen Gorham**—there is a new *devils and virgins* ballet to **Offenbach** music.

THE dancing in 20th Century-Fox's CinemaScope version of **Oscar Hammerstein** and **George Bizet's** *Carmen Jones* is not much more than what the cafe scene holds but the film itself is an exciting, brilliantly conceived modernization of the Bizet opera, reset in wartime coloured America.

Carmen works in a parachute factory, **Jose** is a corporal in the airforce, the "other woman" is **Cindy Lou** and the toreador is heavyweight **Dusky Miller.** The complete cast is coloured, the musical setting is brilliant and the lyrics, of course, quite incredible.

But neither **Bizet** nor **Petit** ever had a Carmen such as **Dorothy Dandridge.** This ravishingly beautiful Negress dominates what is not only a major production but a major gamble on the part of a commercial company.

Carmen Jones sums up what theatrical excitement means—one of the best films of the year, and an experiment in casting which is either recklessly inspired or thoughtfully novel.

ON December 29 **Rene Jeanmaire and Roland Petit** were married in St. Cyr, near Paris. This might well spark the return of **Zizi** to the Ballets de Paris but—meanwhile—my congratulations on the very appropriate marriage. I doubt if any two dancers are so well suited as **Jeanmaire and Petit** ; they should be very happy.

Also coming to the Empire is the entire Zagreb Opera and Ballet. At the Opera **Florence Schmitt's** *Tragedy of Salome* has been in rehearsal with **Lycette Darsonval** re-creating the principal role in this **Diaghilev** ballet. **Albert Aveline** has choreographed and the decor and costuming is by **Yve Brayer.**

IT sometimes surprises the enthusiasts who buy the African and Indian paintings by **F. Joss** to find that, without the "F." **Joss** is the cartoonist on London's *Star*, the evening paper.

Anyone in the West-end's Embassy club last month would have been even more surprised to see **Joss** fathering his daughter to the club each evening for her appearance there.

The daughter **Joss—Barbara**—has been studying ballet for years, recently appeared briefly for Sadler's Wells at Covent Garden. But she wanted more exciting work than a walk-on part—even at Covent Garden !

Now she is one third of an act, which mixes Hungarian, Latin American and **Charleston** together and makes what agent **Will Collins** calls "great variety".

Behind the scenes is Hungarian dancer **Klari Szechy** whom you may have seen on television. And, to **Klari,** her act is proof that you can give a variety audience ballet and they will like it. Now she is planning a ballet, using the act, for television—called *Magyar* '55. I hope it works out—it could be very interesting. And that is just what television needs !

BERYL PAUL is, happily, not content merely to talk of "small" ballet but has begun active work towards trying for results under normal limitations.

Rehearsing now—and not unwilling to hear from any available male dancers, by the way !—**Beryl Paul** has several ballets ready for production, she tells me, and quite a few workable ideas. Anyone who can help—or help themselves in the case of dancers—should contact her now.

A full-scale biography of **Nora Kovach** and **Istvan Rabovsky** has been written by the London editor of a New York newspaper and is to be serialized there, and later published in book form. This is only one of a number of interesting book plans for the coming year . . . . **Louis Bromfield** has scripted a new ballet for the New York City Ballet on the **Johnny Appleseed** legend. **George Balanchine** will, of course, choreograph . . . . . **Eric Zeisl**, the German composer, will collaborate with **Heinz Roenheld** on *The Looters* for Universal-International. **Zeisl** has written the music for a number of Continental ballets . . . .

THE United States State Department and the French Foreign Office have collaborated to present a Festival of American Arts in Paris later this year. Ballet will be included and **Robert Dowling** is to produce . . . . The Goyo Japanese Ballet will visit Europe this year, attending the 1955 Wiesbaden Festival and, later, other centres . . . . .

NORA KOVACH and **Istvan Rabovsky** will not return to Britain upon the completion of Festival Ballet's north American tour. They are settling in America and joining Ballet Theatre immediately, as I wrote earlier. The *Dancing to Freedom* film made by the pair after their escape is, according to **David Raher** (New York critic of the Dancing Star) "incredibly well done."

THE New York Metropolitan is staging its first full evening ballet, *Vittorio*, with **Mia Slavenska** in the lead and the score composed of **Verdi** fragments. Is this Verdi-grist catching ?

WHAT happened to **Harald Lander,** announced originally to choreograph for **Markova** in *Where The Rainbow Ends* ? **John Taras** actually completed the choreography.

EUGENE LORING is dance directing *Silk Stockings* for Broadway and other choreographic assignments include **Helen Tamaris** to *Plain And Fancy* and **Sophie Maslow** to *Sandhog*.

THE *Daily Sketch* is certainly the newspaper for dancers and balletgoers. Not only is **Margot Fonteyn's** retirement prophesied regularly in its pages, but quite a few items of ballet interest are published, **Violetta Elvin** writes a feature every week and the 'Inside Information' columnist, **Alan Gardner,** even reads *Ballet Today* ! All this and a cartoon supplement, too !

HOPE **Sheridan** writes from New York : **Rosalind Russell** chairwomaned the Theatre Committee of the Fancy Free Ball held at the Waldorf proceeds of which went to **Lucia Chase's** Ballet Theatre to assist new productions . . . . NATION critic **Harold Clurman** has been elected to the board of Ballet Theatre . . . **Paula Lloyd** ankled *On Your Toes* and has rejoined Ballet Theatre . .

DENYS PALMER, one of **Mona Inglesby's** former partners in the International Ballet, has done the choreography for his first full-length production : The Players' Theatre 1840-style pantomime *The Sleeping Beauty In The Wood* which opened on December 21.

A Maurice Seymour photograph of Genia Melikova who is causing a great deal of interest in Paris at the moment.

The cast was headed by **Jane Wenham, Hattie Jacques, Don Gemmell** and **Jean Anderson.**

Denys Palmer's biggest task was a *Harlequinade* with dances and costumes based on the 1840 period.

Among his company were **Joy Carter, Jeanne Lusby** (his wife) ; **Christine Roberts,** ex-International Ballet ; **Michael Holmes** ; and **Marjorie Woodhams** ex-TV Ballet.

FELICITY GRAY of TV's "Ballet for Beginners" fame has done the choreography for her first West End musical : **Emile Littler's** Christmas Show *Happy Holiday* which opened at the Palace Theatre on December 22.

Felix—as she is known to her friends—has worked on many provincial productions and such ballet companies as the London Theatre Ballet and Theatre Arts Ballet.

She, herself, has appeared in the West End in *Tuppence Coloured* at the Globe in 1947—as Principal Dancer. Originally she was a Sadler's Wells dancer.

Stars of *Happy Holiday* are **Reg Dixon, Marie Burke, Austin Melford, Janet Brown and Erica Yorke.**

Germany

* * * * * * * * * * *

Berlin : The first German dance conference was held at the Deutsche Akademie der Kunste, East-Berlin during December. Chairmen of the committee were Gret Palucca, one of our famous dancers of the New German Dance period, Jean Weidt, choreographer of the formerly Ballet des Arts and balletmaster at Schwerin and Lilo Gruber, balletmistress at Leipzig and next season in this position with the Berlin Staatsoper.

Invitations for the participation in this congress were open to every interested choreographer, teacher or dancer in west and east Germany with the whole charges paid by the academy.

The conference started with a lecture about the present situation of the dance in Germany and its next tasks.

* * *

It was followed by performances of several ballet companies from the east-zone and the Staatsoper Berlin including "*Apollo and Daphne* (Leo Spies), *Das Recht des Herrn* (Bruns) and *Der bekehrte SpieBer* (Kabalewski). The Komische Oper presented *Classic Suit* (Tchaikoviski), *Polovtsian Dances* (Borodin) and *Sheherazade* in the excellent choreography by Gertrud Steinweg.

Further the Metropol theatre with *Kleider machen Leute* (Griesbach) and the *Vogelscheuche* (Dvorak). A matinee of the students of the State-Schools of Dance and a competition for young dancers aged between 17-18 were launched.

* * *

Stuttgart : Tatiana Gsovsky staged her Hamlet choreography at Stuttgart-Staatsoper. This ballet by the composer Boris Blacher is one of her finest works. Here Otti Tenzel was seen as Ophelia. For the next year Madam Gsovsky will form a small ballet troupe to tour the USA. The programme will consist of *Hamlet* (Blacher) *Der Idiot* (Henze), *Bolero* (Ravel), *Der rote Mantel* (Nono) and *Pelleas und Melisande* (Baumann). Each ballet in her choreography.

Hannover : Edel von Rothe is the guest ballerina in Yvonne Georgis' new ballet *Evening in Hannover* with *Fantastic Symphony* by Berlioz and *The Serenade for Strings* by Tchaikowski. Trofimova will dance also a principal part in Bartok's *Miraculous Mandarin* in the choreography of Alan Carter at the Staatsoper Munich.

* * *

Hamburg : *Teufel im Dorf* by Lhotka (Devil in the Village) in the choreography of Helga Swedlund with the guest ballerina Maria Litto and Strawinski's *Renard* in the choreography by the balletmaster of Frankfurth Herbert Freund are in preparation at the Hamburg Staatsoper, not to forget *L'Histoire de Soldat* (Strawinski) and *Oedipus Rwx* (Strawinski).

The Youngest Since Massine

by MARGARET CHURCHILL

NEWEST and youngest choreographer for the Grande Balle de Marquis de Cuevas is twenty year old Leon Grieg, whose first ballet will be presented by the Company during their current Paris season. He is, in fact, the youngest choreographer to have a ballet presented by a major company since Massine created *Midnight Sun* in 1915.

The ballet *Neige et Sable* tells the love story of two circus leopards and will last about twenty minutes. The music has been specially composed by Nico Kaufmann and decor and costumes are by Tricia Davis. The leopards are to be danced by Marjorie Tallchief and Wladimir Skouratoff and their trainer by Paul Maure. Sonia Arova, who has just joined the company, may also take the part of the female leopard.

IN LONDON

Leon, who was gorn in Alexandria in April 1934 and came to England six months later, studied dancing with Marjorie Upton for four years.

At the age of 16 he danced in *King's Rhapsody* at the Palace Theatre for three months to earn sufficient money to study with Preobrajenska in Paris.

Here he was engaged for the lead in an Italian Revue after which he returned to England and joined the Ballet Russe for their Provincial tour and London seasons. He joined the Cuevas Company in March 1952 and has danced sólo roles in *La Tertulia*, *Rondo Capprichioso* and *Aurora's Wedding*.

IMPACT

Tall and good looking, Leon has excellent line and elevation and a gift for entering completely into the spirit of each ballet he dances. He believes in making the most of every part, however small, and can be relied on to step into any place in the repertoire at a moment's notice. He has many exciting and ambitious plans for future ballets but believes that his first attempt should use a simple theme.

His interest is more in theatrical impact and effect than in pure dancing and he wants the audience to feel emotion and enjoyment without worrying about the technical means by which this is achieved.

It is too soon yet to prophesy success for *Neige et Sable* but it is certain that here is a vital personality of whom much more will be heard.

Mambo and Other Trends

by PAUL GOLD

ONE of the several "missing links" in ballet is our lack of interest in contemporary trends. I find the amount of study spent on, say, new music almost nil. I wonder why this is ? Surely the essentially balletic music of Ellington and Kenton is worth the hearing ?

In this column I will regularly try to bring to your attention some of the new music which should prove of interest to dancers and, especially, to choreographers.

The mambo has rapidly swept into popularity since last year and, although few authentic mambos are in easy availability, a few are—and a few pseudo-mambos can be heard meanwhile. Perez Prado is one of the better artists, and the Decca catalogue holds several other mambo composers and musicians.

EXCITEMENT

Two of the better pseudo-mambos are the Duke Ellington *Bunny Hop Mambo* which, although it features a more tightly-knit and sophisticated writing than the genuine article, does give the basic rhthym and a good idea of the percussion content.

The excitement engendered, and the somewhat jungle-atmosphere quality should inspire a longer work from the composer and few choreographers could resist its suggestiveness, surely ? (Capitol CL14153).

Less important is the Herman *Woodchopper's Mambo* (Capitol CL14183) which was composed by Joe Bishop. This is a commercial mambo.

BRIDE

Away from mambo, perhaps the most interesting new modern work is Ellington's *The Tattooed Bride* which is of a fifteen minute duration and could stand several interpolations to make it suitable for a short ballet treatment.

Ellington's scoring is always thick, and full of allusions and runs to both rhythmic and melodic counterpoint of quite incredible inventiveness. The changes of tempi, use of top brass and theatrical quality of "Bride" are all of great interest. And the number of characterizations motivated in the score should give any choreographer sufficient lead.

This suite is on a long-play disc (Columbia 33SX1022).

LA NUITE

Next month I will hope to deal with several new Kenton scores and with the Sidney Bechet ballet suite *La Nuit est une Sorciere* on London International abel.

–FESTIVAL BALLET IN AMERICA *from page nine*

Festival Ballet's young British dancers, especially the strong male contingent, were praised for a discipline which did not sacrifice all animation. However, it was felt that apart from a poor choice of repertory, a large part of the company's artistic failure on the North American tour can be attributed to its lack of own stars and the poor choice of guest stars.

Tamara Toumanova gave adequate interpretations in *Petrouchka* and in *Giselle* ; in all other ballets she affected such a ridiculous manner that audible laughter accompanied her movements. Rabovsky was praised for his *Prince Igor* and Norah Kovach for her *Esmeralda* ; in other roles they were thought miscast.

With Geoffrey Corbett, Igor Strawinski, and Robert Zeller as conductors, many critics thought that Festival Ballet was far more accomplished from the musical than from the balletic point of view.

Some Soviet Follies

THE MUSICIAN AT THE BALLET
by
Montague Calman

A NUMBER of Soviet artists were banded together recently and shepherded onto the Princes Theatre stage by the British Soviet Friendship Society. This political body does not seem to realise that even the most inspired dancers need settings, direction, lighting and above all musical artistry if they are to show their true talents. Why does not someone tell the Soviet authorities that only a professional impresario can offer the adequate frame for the pride of the Russian ballet eye ?

The Russians are artists and pay great attention to the musical side of their ballet. For despite the smallness of this visiting troupe—six in all—they brought over with them what they call a concert master. According to the programme blurb, this Alexei Zibtsev has a job as concert master : "To direct rehearsals and to get the dancers accustomed to the tempo and rhythm of the orchestra." Yet could he operate under the existing conditions imposed upon him by the British Soviet Friendship Society ? I can only judge by results.

A scratch orchestra plugged away in the manner of revue theatre band. An extract from Act II of *Swan Lake* tore Tschaikovsky's music into the rolls of musical fat, giving me indigestion. Where were the delicate strings singing out the poetry of romantic love ? And in Glinka's *Ivan Susanin* the brass roughly rode over some of the exquisite moments of the Mazurka.

WORSE

WHAT is the use of an orchestra if it does not fully express the musical mood ? But worse was to come. The conductor, a Briton, set a circus daredevil riders pace for the "Walpurgisnacht ballet" from Gounod's "Faust". This may well have created the hostile mood leading eventually to *some of* the audience booing the unfortunate dancers who followed. And if some booed two superb artists—Raissa Struchkova and Alexander Lapauri—something is wrong somewhere !

And if you have not had enough musical torture. For some of the ballet items a trio—piano, violin and cello—helped to create a the dansant atmosphere for all to sip their coffee ! Frankly I was disgusted.

Though the dancers were given major billing, it was Avner Barayev, a 33 year old virtuoso, who stole the evening. His instrument, a percussive doira, is the violin of the East. About the size of a cymbal and looking like a large dinner gong, it is skin covered on one side and is played by the hands, fists and fingers. From the doira Barayev ranges the gentle clicks of a metallic stick to throbbing, pulsating jungle rhythm of a set of native drums : his fingers command the entire orchestra of percussive rhythm. This sublime musician, living within himself the art of creative rhythm, is the undoubted King of Percussion.

But sad to say even with this artist the amateur impresarios had to interfere. Accompanying the seductively attractive Uzbek Folk Dance, brought to life by Gulnara Mavayeva, the richly resonant doira was given a companion for the savagery of Russian folk music : The twentieth century sounds of a Steinway grand piano. Is this artistic presentation ?

PENNY GUIDE

THE Royal Opera House's penny programme of forthcoming presentations gives much food for thought on the subject of conductors of ballet. The operatic conductors, and they are many for a limited repetoire, have their names mentioned for each performance. But why are the ballet conductors omitted ?

For ballet two conductors have to cope with a tremendously diverse musical repetoire. Can it be that the Covent Garden authorities believe that the conductor of the ballet orchestra is not as important as a ballet dancer ? And would they leave out his name if it was Ansermett ?

Covent Garden have two musicians who tackle ballet : Irving and Hollingsworth. Both are men well versed in musical matters and are extremely competent. But they cannot be specialists in every type of music. No conductor, not even a Toscaninni, Beecham or Krauss could be. Each has his high and low spots. And unlike opera at Covent Garden restricted to some ten works, ballet flushes through a wide range of musical creation. Why do we not allow these two musicians of Covent Garden to specialise and breathe freely in the fields in which their musical talents abound ? Let them feel free to express themselves in their own loves rather than to try to master all, at the cost of commonplace for everything.

Of late Covent Garden is showing wisdom in its operatic administration. It staunchly adheres to the policy of opera in English and allows the joys of humour and depths of tragedy to be understood by all. Stage producers are slowly being called in to make opera a theatrical experience. And Rafael Kubelik will head a large and good company of home bred conductors. Please give ballet a chance too !

Raissa Struchkova and Alexander Lapauri a shot from The Sleeping Beauty *which is one of Struchkova's roles but which London did not have the opportunity to see.*

RECORDED SOUND

VISITING *The Observer* Diaghilev Exhibition I found the recorded music there giving life to what for me would have otherwise been a museum piece. Ballet is essentially a living art, and the startling aridity of Strawinsky supplied an astringent lotion, wiping away the feeling of decadence around Forbes House. Going down the grand staircase of an age gone by, and seeing the Sleeping Beauty lying at the foot of the stairs, I was captivated by the sounds of music around me.

On display at the exhibition are some handwritten original scores of interest : *Le Pas D' Acrier* (Prokofiev), *L'Oiseau De Feu* (Strawinsky), *Le Tricorne* (de Falla), and an arrangement by Toscaninni of Scarlatti's *Les Femmes de Bonne Humeur.*

Some of the music relayed over the unobtrusive loudspeakers is excellent. I particularly liked during my various visits, Sir Thomas Beecham's *Le Coq D'Or* (Rimsky-Korsakov), *La Boutique Fantasque* (Rossini) conducted by Robert Irving, and Constan Lambert conducting Walton's *Facade Suite.*

And if you think I overemphasise the musical side of ballet let me record that among the men who have lectured nightly at Forbes House there have been a number whose lives have been devoted exclusively to music. What say the dance fans now ?

Ballet in Review

—From page Six

FIVE DOLINS

Five Anton Dolins tolling under five sets of ropes from the prologue of *Esmeralda* would be fun enough, but with Jack Hylton's *Crazy Gang* as the impersonators the result is riotous.

The show, *Jokers Wild*, is a deft, close-groomed revue with a blue rinse but five good excuses. This Crazy Gang is the best reason extant for upping the old age pension start.

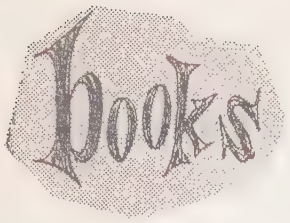
Of dance interest there is Sheila O'Neill (of *Paint Your Wagon*) and the Carden Dancers who boast one very attractive girl. But, of more point, the John Tiller girls provide an outstanding example of theatrical finish and really superb synchronisation.

Costuming throughout is lush, the show is revved perfectly to twice-nightly framing and once again George Carden, Alec Shanks and Ross Parker have administered a confident gilt edge to Jack Hylton's security—the Victoria Palace.

PAY THE PIPER

At the Saville Laurier Lister, whose Airs on a Shoestring are now firmly esconced at the Court, makes a second try. Sadly the second glass lacks cohesion—the mixer is absent. Only April Olrich, in fact, makes the evening bright. And she has started her career well with the work she does here.

The only other Christmas shows I saw were the Palladium's everfine pantomime and Gorlinsky's *Where The Rainbow Ends* at the Festival-hall. This, my daughter Lee (aged two) enjoyed moderately until the entrance of Alicia Markova when —I am proud to mention—she became enraptured and proved to the dismay of the charlatans that the Craig-Raymond balletic instinct is hereditary !



Diaghilev's Oversight : and the Aftermath. By John Gregory. With a Foreword by Sir John Anderson. (The Federation of Russian Classical Ballet, 3s. 6d.)

THIS plea for a fuller recognition of the 'Russian School' is one that John Gregory is well qualified to make. Both he and his wife, Barbara Vernon, were pupils of Nicolas Legat, whose teachings they pass on in their Chelsea studio; and both are closely connected with the Federation of Russian Classical Ballet of which Mathilde Kchesinska is president.

The 'Russian School' stems from that first *Academie de la Danse* in Paris, through Vestris and Bournonville to Christian Johannsen, teacher of the great dancers of the Russian Imperial Schools, of whom Kchesinska and Legat were two of the most famous. Diaghilev's dancers were drawn from these schools, and when the supply came to an end, as a result of the Revolution, his company lacked its original superlative quality. He made no attempt to found a school that would feed his ballet and perpetuate a great tradition.

This, Gregory contends, was Diaghilev's oversight.

The aftermath : "the real trouble with the post-Diaghilev period and its eventual upsurge of interest and endeavour has been that in no one place has there existed a consistent plan or movement to guide future generations of dancers towards an ideal." We have still to learn from the Russians—from the 'Russian School' which has during the past year, given us a glimpse of pure exciting dancing, virile and powerful—critical though we may be of its setting generally. A new approach is necessary, more joyous, more spiritual.

The variations and conclusions drawn from this theme are controversial and stimulating, but though the booklet is of interest to all who care for the future of the art, it is essentially for those who have much more than a superficial knowledge of the technique and theory of ballet.

Ballets of Today. By Cyril Beaumont. (Pitman, 21s).

BEAUMONT says of the present volume that "although it deals solely with contemporary work, it can for all practical purposes serve as a second supplement to the *Complete Book of Ballets*, to which end I have prefaced the description of the work of certain choreographers with a biographical essay."

He now covers—leaving a gap of three years—forty two ballets produced since 1945 : ballets which have already achieved a place in the repertoire of well-known companies, and of others which if less well-known are equally interesting. It covers the work of thirteen choreographers, among them Ashton, Balanchine, Charrat, Crkoan, Robbins, Petit, and Taras. A sequel is promised to deal with a number of Soviet ballets, and other contemporary choreographers, which will, no doubt, include Helpmann and Tudor and bridge those rather important three years. The photographs are admirable.

Dancing Peel. By Lorna Hill. (Nelson, 8s. 6d.)

THE brother and sister in this junior novel live with their mother in a Border fortress, known as a peel tower. They love their wild Northumbrian home, and they love dancing. Not the folk dancing one might expect, but ballet in the case of the girl, and Spanish for her brother.

Their efforts to save their home and careers when misfortune threatens them make a very entertaining story, and the atmosphere of the Border Country and the personalities of the two unusual children have been well captured.

P. C.

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* * *

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OF all professions in the public eye—opera-singing, politics, tight-rope walking, conducting and so on—ballet dancing requires by far the greatest variety of talents and physical attributes in its exponents ; this, I think, is the main reason why a great ballerina seems to us an almost supernatural creature, belonging to myth and fairy-tale rather than to real life.

One of the few qualities with which a great ballerina is not associated in the public mind is intelligence ; and yet her need for intelligence is so great that I have put this first in my list.

She needs intelligence to master all the subtleties of characterisation style and period in a new part, and she needs it equally to cope with her own physical and temperamental deficiencies and the intrigues characteristic of the theatrical world. But even the simplest aspects of dancing demand much more than a physical knack of getting through the steps : dancing is a symbolic language capable of the greatest refinement and precision, differing from the spoken and written language in that it deals with feelings and moods rather than concepts, and only an artist of high intelligence can handle the language of dancing with full understanding of its limitations and possibilities.

As Madame Rambert made clear in her second talk at the Diaghilev Exhibition, Nijinski was quite incapable of explaining in words what he wanted his dancers to do : he could only demonstrate over and over again, using the language in which he was a master.

EXPERIENCE

Of course a dancer cannot express feelings, no matter how high her intelligence, if she does not experience them ; and I would place emotional power and dramatic ability very high among the qualities I expect in my ideal ballerina.

A high degree of technical perfection is also essential—otherwise a dancer cannot concentrate on what she is seeking to express—but dancing without emotional warmth and personality leaves me cold, no matter how perfect the technique.

Closely allied to emotional power is spontaneity : if there is any flaw in the personality which inhibits the flow of feeling this is immediately apparent in the dancing. (A dancer in movement reveals every layer and facet of her psyche with appalling clarity.)

Luck She May Have All Three"

BALLERINA"

Fernau Hall

This means that if the dancer is forced to develop in a way contrary to her natural bent—or forces herself to develop in this way—she becomes little more than a parody of the artist she might have been.

In her early years in the junior company Nadia Nerina showed admirable joie de vivre, and obviously had it in her to become an outstanding soubrette ; but she chose to concentrate on serious roles such as *Odette*, for which she was unsuited by temperament, and now her performances in soubrette roles such as the Can-Can Dancer have little of the zest and spontaneity essential to them.

LINE

Dancing is nothing without line (that is why modern dance is usually so dull), and a great ballerina must have fine natural sense of line which is perfected by a great teacher.

I have no space to discuss the characteristics of the line taught by the various schools extant today : the old French school surviving in Denmark ; the old Milanese school preserved at the Paris Opera ; the St. Petersburg Russian school taught in many cities of Western Europe (also in America) ; the Moscow Bolshoi school (which now seems to be dominant in Russia) ; the Cecchetti Method as it has been developed in England by such great teachers as Margaret Craske (now, alas, in New York) and Nesta Brooking ; and the English R.A.D. school (now changing rapidly).

Two of these schools—the St. Petersburg Russian school and the English version of the Cecchetti Method,—are closely related, and I would have my ideal ballerina receive training from outstanding teachers of both schools after she had completed her basic training in one or the other.

For even the best teacher has some blind spots, as well as some things in which he or she is supremely expert, and if a ballerina is to acquire an all-round technique she must work under several good teachers. Above all she must work with at least one great teacher ; for it is only a great teacher who can pass on the full majesty of the great tradition and ignite the spark of genius in the young aspirant.

MUSICALITY

Dancing is an art of time as well as of space, and the ballerina must have a high degree of natural musicality fostered both in her training and in her professional career.

My ideal ballerina would be able to adjust her phrasing and the timing of her accents so that she could make her movements express the exact nuance of feeling intended by her at each moment, and she would be just as much at home in the lyrical rubato demanded in *Les Sylphides* as in the brilliant attack and precision needed in Act III of *Swan Lake*.

There are three qualities of a ballerina which are so closely related that I must bracket them together : artistic integrity, humility and good taste.

If a ballerina has great talent and gets the opportunity of showing it, she is likely to receive ovations from the public and press which can lead her very easily into smugness and exhibitionism. But in spite of all adulation she must continue to subordinate herself to the choreography, subject all her work to the most penetrating self-criticism, and play to her partner instead of the audience. (He may be a drooling cretin, but she must create the illusion that he is the only man that matters to her : one of the worst faults of Soviet ballerinas is that they rarely even look at their partners.)

ALL OF THEM

It is too much to expect of a dancer that she should have all the above qualities and also have a perfect physique, a beautiful face, and an equal aptitude for all aspects of the technique (leaps, turns, beats, pointwork, double-work etc.)

For one thing, the physical attributes which make for beauty of line are sometimes the opposite of those which facilitate technique : Pavlova's slender and beautifully arched foot, for example, was quite unsuitable for *fouettés*, and she quite rightly avoided them.

What we can expect of a great ballerina is that she should work very hard to remedy any deficiencies in her shape and her technique (as Preobazhenska worked to master pirouettes, and Margot Fonteyn worked to strengthen her feet and improve the shape of her legs.)

We must not expect of the ideal ballerina that she should be free of complexes and profound inner conflicts. It is possible for a supremely well-integrated ballerina to come to maturity : Karsavina is the proof of this. But Karsavinas are extremely rare. The great ballerina is likely to be just as neurotic, or latently psychotic, as anyone else living in this age of anxiety : the best we can hope is that her inner conflicts should drive her to immerse herself in hard work rather than mope in the corner.

The final demand I make of my ideal ballerina is creative power. This may take three forms. There is the creative power of a Pavlowa bringing the role of Giselle to life after it had gathered dust for a generation ; that of a Fonteyn moulding the choreography of an Ashton so as to adapt it to her temperament and style ; and finally that of a Karsavina working under a Fokine (or a Peggy van Praagh working under a Tudor) to give precision and thrilling reality to choreographic ideas different from anything seen before.

All three types of creative power are essential to ballet, and my ideal ballerina must have at least one of them.

With luck she may even have all three.

Thank you, Dennis Bardens

Writing in *World's Press News*, the weekly newspaper of publishing and advertising, Dennis Bardens whose column "Focus on Periodicals" is featured by this weekly, wrote :

"AN up-and-coming magazine is BALLET TODAY, taken over eighteen months ago by Peter Craig-Raymond and redesigned to the great annoyance of some subscribers. It is concerned with trends, activities, prospects and problems affecting everyone in ballet and finds plenty to say about it all. There are good sketches and photographs, and the makeup is popular.

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discs

I admire the Decca Group's enterprise and spirit of adventure—it now gives us some of the de Cuevas ballets on London TWV 91048-9. Both discs are well recorded and will please the admirers of this fine ballet company. Serra's music for *Dona Ines de Castro* may not sound full blooded enough for the tragic theme and sumptuous setting but period must also be considered.

L'Aigrette was shortlived though Chavchavadze's music—reminiscent of Strawinski and Prokofiev but not of their stature—met the needs of the choreographer, Bartholin. Skibine's *Grey Angel* to Debussy's *Suite Bergamasque* and the *Blue Bird pas de deux* are adequately conducted by Cloez but the performances are a little thin.

There are three symphonies this month that have been used for ballet, all of which are good. Prokofiev's *Classical Symphony* is well rendered by Ansermet and the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra. It is a transfer from Decca LXT 2833. filling a Medium Play LW 5096. Lifar took the first movement of Cesar Franck's *Symphony in D Minor* for his ballet, *Passions*, and here we have Andre conducting the Belgian Radio Orchestra, Telefunken LGX 66030, with more warmth and life than Furtwangler's performance, Decca LXT 2905, reviewed last August.

And lastly Tchaikowski's ever-popular *Fifth Symphony* and Massine's adventurous ballet, *Les Présages*. The "baby ballerinas" were virtually unknown then but what famous names, Baronova, Riabouchinska and Toumanova were to become ! Columbia's disc, 33CX1133, gives a good account of the Philharmonia under Karajan.

COLOUR

He does not miss any of the orchestral colour and is in full command of all the big crescendi. This same team is responsible for an excellent *Eine Kleine Nachtmusik*, Columbia 33CX1178, which has been badly needed on LP. This has elegance and life which Keilberth's version lacked in last December's issue.

I am glad Columbia have brought out another *Symphonic Variations*, 33CX1190, to cover up the very poor one with Casadesus, reviewed last March. Both issues are backed with d'Indy's *Symphony on a French Mountain Song*, to which the Italian pianist, Ciccolini, and Cluytens conducting the Paris Conservatoire Orchestra, give it natural charm. Ashton's ballet is very well played and the recording good.

Schwarz, HMV.CLP 1022, does not get from Liszt's *Les Préludes*—Fokine's ballet for Pavlova—the same excitement and urgency as *Galliera* on Columbia 33SX-1013, and without which the work tends to be tame. The Strauss Waltzes on Decca LXT 2965, are most pleasing but it is sad to find that Krauss does not get completely from the Vienna P.O., that truly wonderful Straussian lift, which eludes so many conductors.

LIFAR

Curzon's tender playing of *Impromptu Op.* 142 *No.* 2, Decca LW 5135, one of Schubert's piano pieces in Lifar's ballet, *Variations*, recalls the grace of the Paris Opera ballerinas, and is in contrast to the ugly orchestrated version to which they had to dance. Beethoven's great piano trio, *The Archduke*, with its gay and catchy theme in the last movement, gave Massine the music for his ballet, *Les Arabesques*. HMV's recording, ALP 1184, of Heifetz, Feuermann and Rubinstein, is a transfer from the S.P. set and it has responded fairly well.

The performance is by no means perfect—the piano is the weak spot, damped down and not always firm. However this is the best LP so far and there is enjoyment to be had from it.

EXCERPTS

Nights at the Ballet, PMC 1008, consists of excerpts from *Carnaval, Coppelia. Swan Lake, Les Sylphides, Sylvia, Boutique* and *Nutcracker*, which is quantitatively good value even though Braithwait's conducting is not of the highest order. The overtures to *La Belle Hélene* and *Orpheus in the Underworld*, Brunswick AXL 2014, I did not like. Wallenstein's conducting does not evoke the gaiety of the French capital, while the recording is hard. With Massine's frothy and frivolous *Gaite Parisienne*, HMV DLP 1051 Offenbach is fortunately rescued by Susskind and the Covent Garden Orchestra.

To round off, there is a fine disc of Liszt's *Mephisto Waltz*, Decca LW 5136—the music of Festival Ballet's *Vision of Marguerite.*

B. C.

Digest History of Ballet

By JAY NORMAN Sketches by JUDAH Part Five

THE advent of Isadora Duncan (1878-1927) was probably one of the most significant events in the history of ballet in recent times and her influence on contemporary and successive dance outlook was enormous. At a time when ballet was at its most artificial she wanted to free it from pointe work and the classical technique. Her own technique was based on the movements of the antique Greek dance and she performed in flowing draperies and with bare feet. Although she attempted to train groups to work with her, her form of expression was too personal successfully to be passed on to her pupils. She danced in Europe and America and appeared in St. Petersburg in 1907.

Among those to whom her work was a stimulus and a challenge was Michael Fokine, a young dancer at the St. Petersburgh ballet school. Before she came to Russia he had already submitted a memorandum outlining his own ideas on reform to the Director of the Imperial Theatres, and how far he was from accepting her ideas in full was made clear in his now famous letter to The Times, seven years later (1914). In this he also laid down his Five Principles for ballet :

PRINCIPLES

"Not to form combinations of ready-made and established dance steps but to create in each case a new form corresponding to the subject, the most expressive form possible for the representation of the period and the character of the nation represented . . ."

". . . Dancing and mimetic gesture have no meaning . . . unless they serve as an expression of . . . dramatic action, and they must not be used as a mere divertissement . . ."

". . . The new ballet admits the use of conventional gesture only where it is required by the style of the ballet, and in all other cases endeavours to replace gestures of the hands by mimetic of the whole body . . ."

". . . The new ballet . . . . advances from the expressiveness . . . of the individual body to the expressiveness of a group of bodies . . ."

". . . The new ballet . . . does not demand of the scenic artist that he should array the ballerinas in short skirts and pink slippers . . . It does not impose any specific 'ballet' conditions on the composer or the decorative artist, but gives complete liberty to their creative powers."

The manifesto from which the above is an extract, was destined to make a profound change in the whole conception of ballet and, in fact, Fokine's reforms are now so much taken for granted that we hardly realise our debt. The elaborate scenes and formal patterns of the old ballets, the complete subordination of plot and time plan to the demands of the ballerina and the inevitable decorated tutus could no longer be accepted as the be all and end all of ballet.

"*dishes were presented with great ceremony*"

SUSPICION

Fokine's attempts at reform were met by a good deal of suspicion in the Imperial Theatres and it was not until he worked for Diaghilew that he was given the opportunity to develop them to the full.

From 1909, when Diaghilew's Ballet Russe was founded, until 1914, he created a number of ballets which have never been equalled for evocation of atmosphere, complete homogenity of design and poetic conception of the classical vocabulary. It was almost as though these works were the answer to Duncan's more violent and anarchistic reforms. To this period belong : *Les Sylphides* (1908), *L'Oiseau de Feu* and *Carnaval* (1910) and *Le Spectre de la Rose* and *Petrouchka* (1911).

After he left Diaghilew he created nothing in any way comparable with these recognised masterpieces, the first of many testimonies to the fertilising genius of that remarkable man—Serge Diaghilew.

FIRST LINK

It was as assistant to the new Director of the Imperial Theatres in 1899 that Diaghilew's name first became linked with that of the ballet.

But his ideas soon came into conflict with those of the Directorate and in 1901 he was dismissed. The names of Benois and Bakst had already been connected with that of Diaghilev in the production of *Mir Iskustva*, a journal devoted to the arts, and the first venture of the three friends outside Russia were concerned with the organisation of art exhibitions and the production of opera.

It was not until 1909 that Diaghilew brought his newly formed "Ballet Russe" to Paris with *Le Pavilion D'Armide*, *Les Sylphides*, the Polovtsian dances from *Prince Igor* and *Cleopatre*, all with choreography by Fokine and scenery and costumes by Benois or Bakst, and *Le Festin*, a suite of Russian dances in national costumes.

The dancers were headed by Pavlowa, Nijinski, Karsavina and Bolm. The colours of costume and scenery, the virile dancing of the men, the wonderful dancing of the women, and Fokine's expressive choreography were a revelation to Paris audiences.

TRIUMPH

This wildly triumphant season was followed by others which included the production of Fokine's *Scheherezade*, *L'Oiseau de Feu*, *Le Carnaval*, *Le Spectre de la Rose*, *Petrouchka* and *Le Coq D'Or* and Nijinski's *L'Apres-Midi D'un Faune* (1912) and *Le Sacre du Printemps* (1913).

The Nijinski ballets broke away completely from the classical technique and caused considerable controversy both at their first performances and later.

"*virile dancing of men*"

For twenty years Diaghilew's "Ballet Russe" *was* ballet for the Western world. (The company first appeared in London in 1911). Many of the original company, recruited from the Imperial Theatres, were gradually replaced by other dancers such as Lopokova, Nemchinova, Sokolova, Spessitzeva, Danilova, Markova, Woizikowski, Idzikowski, Cechetti, Massine, Dolin and Lifar.

Pavlowa left after the first Paris season to start a tour with a company of her own but Karsavina remained for a number of years, creating many roles in which her lyrical dancing and expressive mime were shown to wonderful advantage.

Nijinski left in 1916, soon after his marriage and, as is well known, suffered a mental breakdown, never to dance again.

MASSINE

Fokine was succeeded by Massine, Nijinska, whose best ballet was perhaps *Les Biches* (1924), and Balanchine, creator of a number of ballets for Diaghilew, including *La Chatte* (1927) and *Le Fils Prodigue* (1929). Massine, like Fokine, reached his peak as a choreographer under the inspiration of Diaghilew's directorship and never afterwards created a ballet of equal artistic merit.

In *Les Femmes du Bonne Humeur* (1917), *Le Tricorne* and *Le Boutique Fantasque* (1919) he showed a certain grotesque mime.

After the 1914-18 war Diaghilew called in the most advanced painters and musicians to collaborate with him in ballets to attract the bored and war weary public. Among the painters were : Picasso, Braque, Matisse and Ernst and among the composers : Auric, Satie, Sauguet, Prokofiev and Strawinski.

Massine, Nijinska and Balanchine were still providing the choreography. Strawinski had been 'discovered' by Diaghilew before the war when he wrote the scores for *L'Oiseau de Feu*, *Le Sacre du Printemps* and *Petrouchka*, the last named produced under almost ideal conditions in collaboration with Benois and Fokine.

A great deal of bitter controversy has raged round the memory of Serge Diaghilew, but the fact remains that his genius and prodigous energy kept the finest ballet in the world alive for twenty years, and the most outstanding painters, composers, choreographers and dancers were inspired to do their best work under his direction.

When he died in 1929, to all his collaborators ballet seemed to have died with him.

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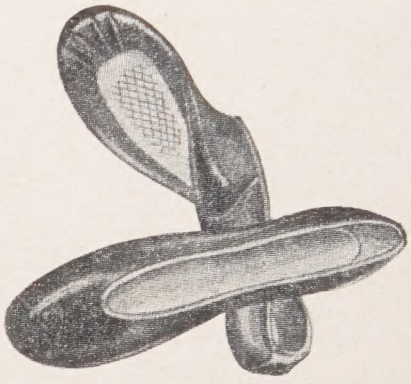

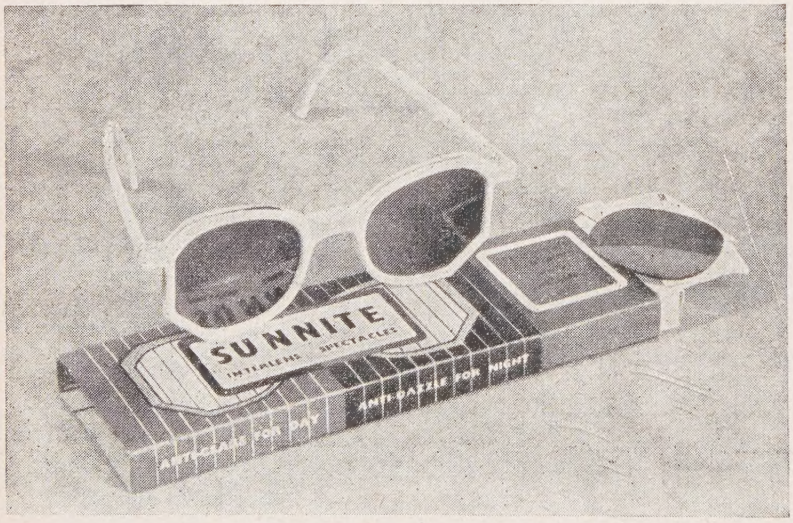

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diary

Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet

Feb. 7 : *Memorial Theatre, Stratford*
21 : *Grand Theatre, Wolverhampton*
28 : *New Theatre, Oxford*
Mar. 7 : *Hippodrome, Derby*
14 : *Alhambra, Bradford*
Feb. 14 : *Gaumont Theatre, Preston*
Mar. 28 : *Theatre Royal, Norwich*
April 4 : *King's Theatre, Southsea*

Sadler's Wells Ballet at Covent Garden

Jan. 24 : *Le Lac des Cygnes (Fonteyn/Somes)*
26 : *Les Patineurs, Ballet Imperial, Firebird (Fonteyn, Grey)*
28 : *Lac des Cygnes (Elvin/Field)*
29 : mat—*Sylphides, Rinaldo & Armida, Checkmate (Grey, Beriosova)*; eve—*Coppelia (Fifield/Shaw)*.
Feb. 1 : *Variations on a Theme of Purcell, Giselle (Fonteyn)*.
3 : *Boutique Fantasque, Giselle (Elvin)*
5 : *Purcell, Rinaldo, Fire bird (Fonteyn)*; eve—*Imperial, Rinaldo, Daphnis & Chloe (Fonteyn)*.
10 : *Lac (Grey/Field)*.
12 : mat only—*Patineurs, Giselle (Elvin)*.
17 : *Angot, Checkmate, Imperial (Elvin, Grey, Nerina)*
19 : mat—*Lac (Nerina/Rassine)*; eve—*Lac (Beriosova/Field)*.
24 : *Sylphides, Boutique, Firebird (Fonteyn)*
25 : *Coppelia (Beriosova/Chatfield/Hart)*
26 : mat—*Sylphides Firebird, Imperial (Fonteyn, Elvin, Grey, Beriosova)*

Yugoslav National Opera and Ballet at the Stoll

Jan. 24 : *Prince Igor*
25 : *Pringe Igor*
26 : *Romeo & Juliet* (mat. and eve.)
28 : *Prince Igor*
28 : *Ero The Joker*
29 : mat—*Romeo & Juliet*; eve—*Prince Igor*
31 : *Pagliacci*; *Gingerbread Heart*
Feb. 1 : *Prince Igor*
2 : mat—*Pagliacci*; *Gingerbread Heart*. eve—*Ero the Joker*
3 : *Devil in the Village*
4 : *Prince Igor*
5 : mat—*Ero the Joker*; eve—*Prince Igor*
7 : *Prince Igor*
8 : *Pagliacci*; *Gingerbread Heart*
9 : mat—*Devil in the Village*; eve—*Prince Igor*
10 : *Pagliacci* ; *Gingerbread Heart*
11 : *Prince Igor*
12 : mat—*Prince Igor* ; eve—*Ero the Joker*

Pilar Lopez Ballet at the Stoll Theatre

Feb. 14 : *Three week season*

Sadler's Wells Theatre Ballet at Sadler's Wells Theatre

Jan. 21 : *Selina, Danses Concertantes, Cafe des Sports*
22 : (mat) *Carnaval, Concertantes, Cafe*
Feb. 1 : *Concertantes, Blood Wedding, Pineapple Poll*
5 (mat) : *Carnaval Selina, Carte Blanche*

ASHTON'S GAUNTLETRY

HAVING praised Mr. Frederick Ashton's gauntletry in promising two new ballets for one evening, I must now admire the tenacity with which he glues himself to the belief that surefooted choreography is enough and sufficient.

Neither of the two new works—which will be covered photographically in the next issue—have jogged the rope-elevator of English ballet to a higher floor, but status quo is an olde Englyshe custom which Sadler's Wells in full association with the Arts Council hardly sets out to dispute.

One of the two works will, I think, stay in the repertoire. The other will put its face to the Cineramic wall with which its designer has encircled his stage.

So to the stayer.

Frederick Ashton

ONLY NOW

Rinaldo and Armida is Firebird sans feather—wickedness wins and the converted enchantress dies whilst her lover flees from the quite effectively mechanated storm. Armida, the enchantress (Svetlana Beriosova) lures victims into her sinister gardens where they die—unless she returns their love. And if she so satisfies biology, she herself dies. A "heads I win, tails you lose" combination which only contemporary ballet could devise. She does, in fact, return Rinaldo's love (Michael Somes—"a warrior" who flees from a storm ?) and so dies in his arms. Julia Farron, as Sibilla—a sorceress—acts as the interfering Greek chorus.

The mainstay of the ballet is the lyrical pas de deux for Beriosova and Somes which is exquisite in part and holds some interesting ideas from Ashton which surpirsed and delighted me. It is fairly tight as a ballet but Malcolm Arnold's music seemed rather uninspired. Beriosova is made hard, a miscasting which even Hollywood or the commercial theatre would not perpetrate with such a natural ingenue. But she works well.

If the ballet has one definite virtue, it is in the decor by Peter Rice. He has conceived his decor in the best of all theatrical colouring—black and white. And he has made a really beautiful, and depthfull setting of the sinister garden. I like his originality, I think he is a major discovery.

Michael Somes as the cleancut, youthfull warrior is well cast and works excellently with Ashton's choreography.

PURCELL

I am more than happy that I was able to give *Rinaldo and Armida* even the scant praise above. *Variations on a Theme of Purcell* was competent in a blousey Balanchine way, but danced without any of the discipline or iced verve of the New York City Ballet.

Benjamin Britten's score is quite effective background music but I can only stand in awe before the choreographer's penetration in seeing its balletic possibilities.

Elaine Fifield, Nadia Nerina and Rowena Jackson perform somewhat *Homage to the Queen* march forwards interspersed with a sequence of pas de trois throughout the ballet. The seleave only one thing to the imagination—the point ?

"If you have a voice sing; if soft arms dance—and with whatever gifts you have for pleasing—please." So said Ovid as Mr Ashton, Misses Fifield, Nerina and Jackson and my quotations dictionary know well. Just what gifts were in evidence with which to please here I do not know. Perhaps there is another, more appropriate quotation from Ovid?

Alexander Grant is again given a clowning role, his facillity in this rather wrecked by the effeminacy of his solo. And the decor ! One of those lush, warm skies I suppose the conception was—but what a Jaffa advertisement it turned out !

NOR YET

I would not call January 6 a night of unreserved success for Frederick Ashton, yet neither was it a failure. I would rather have seen only *Rinaldo* without the *Revelation* which succeeded it after the interval—but, closing my mind to the *Purcell*, I think Ashton has added a not-unenterprising work to the Wells repertoire.

from page four—

BERYL GREY SPEAKS

Stockholm. The Queen of Sweden, who is, as you know, also English, and all my husband's relatives were in the audience.

WHAT do you think are the main qualities in order to become a ballet dancer ?

Beryl Grey : The main quality is something you can't quite explain—personality. A person may be quite ugly, but it doesn't matter if she has this quality. Even an extremely beautiful person needs this personality. You need a strong heart and good physique generally. Other defects can be overcome by training. And last but not least : you must be musical and have a burning desire to dance.

THESE difficulties Beryl Grey has never shirked.
And she has had plenty of them.

We need only be reminded that our guest is nearly 5 feet 7 inches tall. For a ballerina of such height it is not at all easy to find a suitably tall partner. Nevertheless, brown-eyed, dark-haired Beryl Grey has now reached an acknowledged rank. The technical skill of this wholly English ballerina is so perfect that attention fixes itself not upon that but upon the inner radiance and warmth which she brings to the interpretation of the great roles of classical ballet.

It is this without doubt that has inspired also the two books which have been written about Beryl Grey and her art ; one of them begins with verses by John Masefield, the present Poet Laureate of Britain, which he has dedicated to the Sylphides *of Beryl Grey.*

(Miss Grey was speaking to an interviewer of the BBC's Scandinavian Service and this transcript is published by courtesy of this service.)

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